

Published and Copyright (c) 1999 - 2011
All Rights Reserved

Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Fred Horvat

To subscribe to A-ONE, change e-mail addresses, or unsubscribe,
log on to our website at: www.atarinews.org
and click on "Subscriptions".
OR subscribe to A-ONE by sending a message to: dpj@atarinews.org
and your address will be added to the distribution list.
To unsubscribe from A-ONE, send the following: Unsubscribe A-ONE
Please make sure that you include the same address that you used to
subscribe from.

To download A-ONE, set your browser bookmarks to one of the
following sites:

<http://people.delphiforums.com/dpj/a-one.htm>
Now available:
<http://www.atarinews.org>

Visit the Atari Advantage Forum on Delphi!
<http://forums.delphiforums.com/atari/>

==~==~==

~ Skype Flaw Exposes IPs! ~ People Are Talking! ~ Miyamoto To Retire?
~ Syrian Blogger's Plea! ~ MS Pledges Dev Support ~ The Mac A Failure!
~ Spamming Is Expensive! ~ Want To Use Xbox Live? ~ Senators Press ICANN

~ Colleges To Thwart Porn ~ Little Change in Sales ~ Top Facebook Memes!

- * Iran Blocks Virtual Embassy! *-
- * The Government Spies on Mac, Windows? *-
- * Internet's Red Light District Is Available *-

==~==~==

->From the Editor's Keyboard
.....

"Saying it like it is!"

Well, we're still experiencing some Indian Summer weather here in New England, but the weather is just now starting to get a little bit cooler. November was a terrific month for weather, so we'll likely be faced with a horrendous December!

The holiday season is in full swing - ads are everywhere, and shoppers are all over the place trying to find some deals of the century. My wife has become "addicted" to online shopping; she, like me, really hates the holiday mall atmosphere. The more we can reduce the amount of times, and time spent at the malls is definitely a sought-after goal!

So, while I go over my holiday shopping list, as it gets smaller day after day, for another round over the weekend, I'll let you do the same so you can relax and enjoy this week's issue of A-ONE!

Until next time...

==~==~==

->In This Week's Gaming Section - Want To Use Xbox Live? Can't Sue Microsoft!
..... Games Designer Miyamoto To Retire?
Game Sales Little Changed From Year Ago!

==~==~==

->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
.....

Want To Use Xbox Live? First Agree Not To Sue Microsoft

Microsoft just rolled out a big dashboard update to the Xbox 360. In

addition to new voice and gesture controls, Microsoft has also updated its terms of service agreement with a new clause that prevents users from suing Microsoft in the event something unexpected happens to the Xbox 360 or the Xbox Live service.

The gist of the legal document is this: Microsoft wants to settle potential legal issues out of court and in arbitration. Therefore, if you want to use the Xbox Live service, you must agree not to sue Microsoft or to enter into a class action lawsuit. For those who are legally inclined, the full terms of service (TOS) for U.S. users is available online and the legal disclaimer stuff starts at section 18.1.4.

Microsoft is no stranger to class-action consumer lawsuits in relation to the Xbox 360. Early iterations of the console were plagued by the "red ring of death" and the company was forced to extend its warranty and replace a significant number of broken consoles.

Sony updated its PlayStation Network terms of service to prevent class action lawsuits in September. This move followed the massive PlayStation Network hack in April, 2011. Sony continues to face legal challenges over that security breach and presumably decided to limit its liabilities in the future.

Electronic Arts has also updated its terms of service to include "no sue" clauses.

Though understandable from a liabilities point of view, forced mediation is bad news for consumers. Microsoft says that there is no way to opt-out of this agreement. In other words, if you want to use Xbox Live, you can't sue Microsoft.

What do you think of these types of terms of service clauses?

Nintendo Denies Report Games Designer Miyamoto To Retire

Nintendo Co Ltd on Thursday denied a report that Shigeru Miyamoto, widely seen as the world's most influential games designer, would step down from his current position and take a smaller role in the company.

Wired magazine had quoted the 59-year-old creator of popular games franchises including Super Mario Bros and The Legend of Zelda as saying in an interview that he wanted to retire and work on smaller projects, passing the torch to younger designers.

"This is absolutely not true," said a spokeswoman for Nintendo. "There seems to have been a misunderstanding. He has said all along that he wants to train the younger generation.

"He has no intention of stepping down. Please do not be concerned."

Shares in Nintendo fell 2 percent to 11,040 yen on Thursday, compared with a 0.7 percent drop in the Nikkei average.

Any sign that the company might lose Miyamoto would be a fresh blow for Nintendo, which dominated the games industry for years with its Wii consoles and DS handheld devices.

"He is a rockstar in video game and console development," said Dan Sloan, the author of a book on the secretive Kyoto firm.

Nintendo has been struggling since its new generation 3DS device flopped shortly after its February launch, amid harsh competition from smartphones and tablets, while economic uncertainty in Europe and the United States will likely deal a fresh blow in the all-important year-end shopping season.

The yen's strength against the dollar and euro has also crushed the value of profits repatriated from overseas markets.

Miyamoto's influence over the industry has been such that analysts often ask about his latest hobbies to try to glean ideas about what games he might work on next. The report of his retirement sparked a flood of messages on Twitter and tech blogs.

"Inside our office, I've been recently declaring, 'I'm going to retire, I'm going to retire,'" the Wired.com website quoted Miyamoto as saying, via an interpreter.

"I'm not saying that I'm going to retire from game development altogether. What I mean by retiring is retiring from my current position."

The firm was forced to slash the price of its 3DS by about 40 percent six months after launch, and cut its forecast to a net loss for the year. Markets also reacted negatively to the unveiling of the successor to the Wii at the E3 games show in June.

The launch of a raft of new software, including Mario titles, has propped up 3DS sales, at least in Japan, President Satoru Iwata said in an interview with the Nikkei business daily this week. But he also noted that U.S. and European consumers seemed to be delaying year-end spending.

Even if Miyamoto is not ready to step down yet, some point out it may be time for the company to move on.

"Whether the report is true or not, speculation has been growing that Nintendo needs a next generation to take the mantle held by Miyamoto and Iwata over the past decade," said Sloan.

November Video Game Sales Little Changed From Year Ago

November video game sales were little changed from the same month last year, according to new data from research firm NPD Group.

Overall sales were up 0.4% from a year ago to \$3 billion. Video game hardware sales were down 9%, and accessories were off 34%, but software sales were up 15%, or 16% including PC games. While hardware units grew in the month, revenues shrank as prices fell. Note that the big drop in accessories reflects a tough comparison with the Xbox Kinect launch a year ago.

The data includes only new games sold through a physical retail channel, and not downloads or used games.

NPD noted that the Xbox 360 was the best selling console for the fourth

month in a row.

Here's a look at the month's top 10 best selling video games by units:

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3, Activision Blizzard
Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, Bethesda Softworks
Battlefield 3, Electronic Arts
Assassin's Creed: Revelations, Ubisoft
Just Dance 3, Ubisoft
Madden NFL 12, Electronic Arts
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception, Sony
Saints Row: The Third, THQ
The Legend of Zelda: SkywardSword, Nintendo
Batman: Arkham City, Warner Bros. Interactive

==~==~==

A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

U.S. Condemns Iran Blocking of "Virtual Embassy"

The White House on Wednesday condemned Iran for blocking a "virtual embassy" website the U.S. State Department launched to reach out to people in the Islamic Republic.

"Through this action, the Iranian government has once again demonstrated its commitment to build an electronic curtain of surveillance and censorship around its people," the White House said in a statement.

Wikileaks' Spy Files Show Government Snoops on Mac, Windows

Wikileaks has a web page called the Spy Files that shows off a number of Internet surveillance products meant for government agencies. The confidential brochures and slide presentations are made for law enforcement and authoritarian regimes and can be used to spy on the public and track political dissidents. In all, Wikileaks has 287 files for products from 160 companies and promises to reveal even more in the future.

Wikileaks worked with activist groups like Privacy International and press organizations including the Bureau of Investigative Journalism and the Washington Post. The surveillance industry is unregulated, allowing governments, authorities and military to quietly track and intercept calls and e-mails and take over computers, Wikileaks believes.

A large proportion of the products are designed to get around privacy and security safeguards in consumer hardware and software and gather as much information as possible. Some of them can even operate like malware.

One such example includes DigiTask's remote forensic software that works on Windows, Linux, and Mac OS X computers, and some smartphones and is made to circumvent SSL encryption by intercepting the keys on the local system. It can then intercept IMs, e-mails, key logs, remote file access, screenshot capture and Internet activity.

DigiTask also makes a standalone wireless portable system called WifiCatcher that can intercept data from public Wi-Fi hotspots. A packet decoding software is included.

Syrian Blogger's Plea To Fight for Internet Freedom

A Syrian blogger who said he was tortured for expressing his opinions called on world governments Friday to step up the fight for Internet freedom, saying it allowed everyone to expose wrongdoing.

Access to social media has helped expose the violent crackdown on dissent in Syria, Amjad Baiazy told a conference hosted by Dutch Foreign Minister Uri Rosenthal in The Hague.

In the last eight months in Syria "there has been thousands of (pieces of) evidence thanks to social media, not only to show the world, but also Syrians, of the crimes" happening there, Baiazy said.

"This is the main benefit of (Internet freedom). It has turned every citizen into a journalist. Every citizen can use Twitter to broadcast," he added.

Baiazy, now a content editor for Amnesty International, told how he "was arrested and tortured for expressing my opinions," and is awaiting trial for "weakening the national resolve."

He said that when the Syrian regime put down a similar revolt in 1982, ordinary people had no way of telling the world what was happening, and all traces of that uprising were wiped out.

"I urge governments of the world to fight to protect Internet freedom," Baiazy said.

UN rights chief Navi Pillay said last week that more than 4,000 people have been killed in the crackdown over the past eight months, and tens of thousands arrested by President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

At least 12,400 people are reported to have fled the country.

Dutch Foreign Minister Rosenthal told conference delegates a coalition of states had been formed to defend Internet freedom.

The coalition released a statement at the end of the conference to say it would share information on violations of free expression and human rights on the Internet.

The grouping comprises 14 states including Austria, Ghana, Mexico, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Britain and the United States.

"I believe governments can do a lot more. We must ensure an open Internet:

free, accessible, dynamic and not subjected to any top-down control," Rosenthal said.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who gave the keynote address on Thursday night, warned Internet firms to avoid offering "tools of oppression" to authoritarian Middle East regimes trying to crush democracy protests.

Spamming Is a Very Expensive Crime

Yahoo has won a \$610 million judgment against the masterminds of an email-based lottery scheme. The spammers scammed Yahoo Mail customers into giving away their passwords, credit card information and even Social Security numbers. Some "winners" even sent the con artists money. After a three-year long legal battle to recover damages, the unnamed defendants now owe Yahoo an obscene amount of money, however the total is far from the biggest spamming judgment in internet history. Canadian superspammer Adam Guerbuez currently owes over (though he's vowed never to pay) \$873 million for sending out over 4 million lewd Facebook messages. As these multi-million dollar spam settlements tend to find their way to bankruptcy court, it seems unlikely that Yahoo will ever see the money from their colossal court victory. But in the meantime, it's a great way to for the company to show off how aggressively its fighting its spam problem.

Internet ".xxx" District Opens to Website Makers

An Internet version of a red light district opened on Tuesday as Web addresses with ".xxx" endings became available for purchase by those interested in providing online adult content.

Florida-based ICM Registry is overseeing the top-level domain (TLD) geared for adult entertainment and reported that it is seeing nearly a million visits daily to buy.xxx website showing where the addresses can be purchased.

"We've put a lot of money into this, and 10 years of blood, sweat and tears," ICM chief executive Stuart Lawley told AFP.

"I feel validated," he continued. "It has been a long struggle but we stuck to our guns and took the high road."

The non-profit Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) board in March approved a petition to add .xxx to the list of "generic top level domains," those endings that include .com, .net, and .org.

Lawley estimated between \$10 million and \$20 million were spent on the campaign, which began in the year 2000.

"Everything up to today has been the warm-up," Lawley said. "The marathon is on."

He depicted the .xxx domain as "win, win, win" since it creates an online district clearly marked for those intent on finding or avoiding adult

content and which automatically scans websites for viruses or other malicious codes.

"That is a first; scanning doesn't happen at .com," Lawley said. "Instead of adult sites being risky, they will be among the safest sites on the Internet."

ICM enlisted anti-virus specialty firm McAfee to scan .xxx websites daily for nefarious software.

The sites are also designed with tags to be easily identified by parental filter features in commonly used Web browsers, according to Lawley.

Public sales of .xxx addresses come after ICM gave recognized brands and established adult entertainment industry players opportunities to secure websites related to their names.

Some popular web addresses such as gay.xxx were sold at auction. The gay.xxx address sold for several hundred thousand dollars, according to ICM.

The risque online neighborhood was opposed by some adult industry firms that feel they are compelled to buy new website addresses to avoid others capitalizing on their names and by conservative groups opposed to porn.

A lawsuit has been filed accusing ICM of taking advantage of its exclusive control of .xxx to jack up fees. Annual registry of a .xxx website is about \$70 compared with \$10 or so typical of other websites on the Internet.

"The lawsuit is clearly without merit and we will defend against it," Lawley said. "You can choose not to buy a new TLD."

To Thwart Porn, Colleges Are Buying Up .xxx Sites

The University of Kansas is buying up website names such as www.KUGirls.xxx and www.KUNurses.xxx. But not because it's planning a Hot Babes of Kansas site or an X-rated gallery of the Nude Girls of the Land of Aaahs.

Instead, the university and countless other schools and businesses are rushing to prevent their good names from falling into the hands of the pornography industry. Over the past two months, they have snapped up tens of thousands of ".xxx" website names that could be exploited by the adult entertainment business.

"Down the road there's no way we can predict what some unscrupulous entrepreneur might come up with," said Paul Vander Tuig, trademark licensing director at the Lawrence, Kan., school.

The university spent nearly \$3,000 in all. It plans to sit on the .xxx names and do nothing with them.

The brand-new .xxx suffix is an adults-only variation on .com. The .xxx name went on sale to the public for the first time this week, promoted as a way to enable porn sites to distinguish themselves and a means of making it easier for Internet filters to screen out things parents don't

want their children to see.

ICM Registry of Palm Beach, Fla., is the exclusive manager of the .xxx names and sells them through a dozen middleman companies such as GoDaddy.com for an average of \$100 a year.

Indiana University spokesman Mark Land said the school spent \$2,200 to buy www.hoosiers.xxx and 10 other such names. Other Indiana schools took the same step, including Purdue University and Ball State University.

"This is just a modest cost of doing business in the world we live in," Land said.

ICM sold .xxx names for the past two months exclusively to companies and others that wanted to protect their brands from the porn industry. During the so-called sunrise sale, ICM registered nearly 80,000 names, said chairman and CEO Stuart Lawley.

A search of ICM's database finds prominent brand names - including Nike.xxx, Pepsi.xxx and Target.xxx - among those purchased.

"Target has applied to block a number of the .xxx domains that correspond with our registered trademarks," said Lee Henderson, a spokesman for the Minneapolis-based store chain. He added, dryly: "We do not plan to use the domains."

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, or ICANN, which the U.S. government established in 1998 to run the Internet's address system, authorized creation of .xxx earlier this year.

The strongest opposition to the suffix has come from the adult entertainment industry. The Free Speech Coalition, the industry's trade group, lobbied against its creation, complaining among other things about the registration fees.

Allison Vivas, president and CEO of Pink Visual Productions, an adult website operator in Van Nuys, Calif., said her company and others like it were also given the chance to buy up .xxx sites matching their existing .com addresses, but Vivas and many others opted not to.

Vivas said she doesn't think her company - or any organization, adult-oriented or not - should have to pay to protect its trademarks. Otherwise, "it kind of becomes extortion."

Lawley said ICM will take steps to protect existing trademarks even if companies or schools fail to lock down certain website names.

Skype Flaw Can Expose Caller Locations

Skype may expose a user's location by revealing a their Internet Protocol address, researchers say, posing a significant security threat for video calling services.

Scientists at the Polytechnic Institute of New York University initiated video calls to 10,000 randomly selected Skype users and discovered that even when a recipient does not accept the incoming call, the user's Internet Protocol, or IP, address can still be vulnerable to theft.

Armed with an IP address, hackers can uncover specific information about victims, including who they chat with, what they download while online, and in many cases, their zip-code specific location.

For example, the researchers were able to track one Skype user through three different cities during the experiment. The ability to keep tabs on a user may be an immediate nuisance, but the larger implications are alarming. Criminals, terrorists, and hackers may use the security flaw to glean locations of government officials, corporate leaders, politicians, and celebrities.

Computer science professor and study researcher Keith Ross told the New York Post, "Any sophisticated high school or college hacker could easily do this," and emphasized that "the findings have real security implications for the hundreds of millions of people around the world who use VoIP or P2P file-sharing services."

Skype, now owned by Microsoft, boasts 171 million registered users around the world, who may wonder how such a major security flaw escaped notice.

Several sources reported Skype was notified of the IP security gap at least a year ago, and the latest flaw isn't the first. The company experienced a security glitch with its Android mobile phone app last year that exposed users' cell phone numbers, profiles, chat logs, and more.

Skype Tuesday said it will address the issue. "We value the privacy of our users and are committed to making our products as secure as possible," said Adrian Asher, chief information security officer for Skype. "Just as with typical Internet communications software, Skype users who are connected may be able to determine each other's IP address. Through research and development, we will continue to make advances in this area and improvements to our software."

Skype's reputation and bottom line may take a hit if users don't feel safe using the service, and with no specific time frame for a solution, the company may see a decline in video calling, which may fuel advertising and investor concerns. As a Microsoft acquisition, Skype is set to be deeply integrated into Windows software in the future, and considering Windows' widespread usage, the company may have to shore up security fast in order to escape larger security concerns.

In the meantime, Professor Ross advises Skype users to keep the service turned off unless they are expecting a call, and not to use their real names as their Skype user names.

Microsoft Pledges Windows Developers Generosity

Microsoft Corp. is stepping up its competition with Apple and plans to give developers who write software for Windows computers and devices a greater share of revenue sold through the company's upcoming Windows Store.

As long as the software, or app, has made at least \$25,000 in revenue, Microsoft plans to give developers an 80 percent cut. Apple now gives developers 70 percent of the revenue that apps bring in. If a Windows app hasn't reached the threshold yet, Microsoft will share 70 percent as well.

The bigger cut to successful developers is the latest sign that Microsoft is trying to compete with Apple - and with phones running Google's Android - on the app front by luring developers with financial incentives.

"We intend to offer the industry's best terms, so that the best apps make developers a lot more money on Windows than on any other platform," Ted Dworkin, partner program manager for the Windows Store, said in a blog post Tuesday.

The success of Apple's iPhones and iPads partly comes from the fact that its app store has a larger selection than any of its rivals. That means more games, entertainment guides and other apps available from outside developers to extend the functionality of the devices.

Through iTunes, Apple has also made it easy to buy and sell apps through its App Store, something other companies have been playing catch-up on.

Citi Investment Research analyst Walter H. Pritchard said it's not surprising that the company is giving more lucrative financial terms for developers. That's because he doesn't consider Windows Store revenue as important for Microsoft, because the company's business focuses on the Windows platform itself.

In other words, Microsoft makes more money by getting people to buy devices running Windows software - even if it means sacrificing some of the app revenue to make that happen.

The Windows Store will be available on PCs, laptops and tablets running Windows 8. The company didn't disclose plans for mobile devices.

Microsoft, which is based in Redmond, Wash., plans to include apps in its Bing search engine results to make them easier to find.

It also plans to open the store to customers when it releases a "beta" test version of Windows 8 in late February. Pritchard said the February beta launch suggests a late October launch for the general market. Microsoft has not said when it's launching Windows 8 for everyone.

Steve Wozniak: The Macintosh Was A Failure

Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak has revealed some interesting opinions about some of Apple's products that failed in an interview.

Speaking to Indian Newspaper Sunday MIDDAY, Woz conceded that the Apple III had been a failure - something that few would dispute - but also said that the Macintosh had been a failure too.

"The Apple III was a failure, the LISA was a failure, and the Macintosh was a failure. It was only by modifying the Macintosh hugely and over time that we made it a good computer," Wozniak said.

The failure of the Apple III was caused by marketing executives being in charge of the project. "If the guys at Apple had built the machine that they would love, it would have been successful. It came instead from formulas from Apple executives.

"Marketing people were in charge and some very bad decisions got made, in my opinion. There were hardware failures. You put out a product that has failures right away, and even if you fix it a year later, it just doesn't sell. It's the same thing with any smartphone today. It comes out and it has something horribly wrong about it. You can fix everything wrong about it, and it still won't sell. It has missed its window of opportunity."

In contrast, Wozniak said that the success of the Apple II was in large part due to his fellow Apple co-founder Steve Jobs. "Steve Jobs had a large part to play in it, and he knew where he wanted to go with it. It was an excellent product. Steve Jobs sought the best things in the world. He knew that I was the best designer, and that Apple II was the best computer, and that's why he wanted both."

Wozniak claims in the interview not to have read Walter Isaacson's biography of Jobs, though he does actually own the title. "I have been so busy that I never read it. But I have lived a lot of it. So I am sure it is accurate. Steve Jobs was himself after honesty in the book, and he did not want the book to be closed or to hide the truth."

He describes Jobs' death as a "shock". "Steve Jobs was such an important part of my life that sometimes I tear up," he said.

Computer History Museum Launches Steve Jobs Site

The Computer History Museum has today launched a special online exhibit dedicated to Apple co-founder Steve Jobs. The site reaches back to the high school exploits of Jobs and fellow founder Steve Wozniak, and chronicles various stories through until the iPad, which the museum describes as Jobs' "last major product launch." Links take visitors to related materials, such as early business plans for the Macintosh, and a copy of a Homebrew Computer Club newsletter.

Of special interest is rare video of 23-minute presentation by Jobs in 1980, when Apple was already four years old. The museum notes that Jobs credits Apple's founding to luck as well as skill. "For some crazy reason in the universe, two people from Los Altos and Cupertino, California managed to want something that just so happened to be what about a million other people wanted," Jobs says in the clip.

The Apple founder also talks about some of the obstacles the company faced at the time, such as bringing the cost of computers down, or exploiting extra processing power. A major goal for the company was reducing the barriers to learning computers, for which Jobs set out a four-year timeline. In 1984 Apple would launch the Macintosh, the first successful PC to use a graphical interface and a mouse.

Senators Press ICANN on Generic Top-Level Domains

Senators asked the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) to slow down the process of releasing new top-level domains Thursday at a hearing of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. But the discussion was moot. ICANN, not under the governance of the Senate, sees it as a done deal.

Dan Jaffe, EVP of government relations for the Association of National Advertisers (ANA), told the Senate committee that brands might have to spend \$2 million or more to acquire new top-level domains, or TLDs, to prevent cybersquatters from registering them.

Angela Williams, SVP and general counsel for the YMCA in the U.S., said her organization already had been the victim of cybersquatting.

ICANN, the not-for-profit organization charged with handling domain-name issues, began to consider removing restrictions on gTLDs - the letters to the right of the dot Internet URLs - in 2009. New gTLDs could be anything from a product category, such as .hotel, to a brand name, such as .coke.

But the ANA and other organizations complain that companies would be forced to undergo additional expense to defend their trademarks, while consumers would be confused about whether, for example, web addresses ending in .coke really were managed by Coca Cola.

Wednesday, Rod Beckstrom, ICANN CEO, warned companies they needed to prepare for the introduction of the new generic Top Level Domains (gTLDs). In an ICANN press release, he said, "Time is short. If you have not done so, now is the time to get expert advice and get your marketing people engaged to take advantage of new opportunities ... If you do not choose to apply, you should still pay attention to those who do, and use the protections built into the program to safeguard your brand or community."

ICANN has said that its decision is the result of months of meetings and deliberation by all stakeholders.

Jaffe, testifying on behalf of the ANA and the Coalition for Responsible Internet Domain Oversight (CRIDO), a coalition of 154 national and international companies and trade associations, complained that ICANN had ignored 12 recommendations made by law enforcement and asked, "If all these groups feel so strongly, where is this consensus?"

Venture capitalist Esther Dyson, ICANN's original chair, said, "Generic TLDs create opportunities for entrepreneurs but not for the economy. It's a big waste." For example, she said, "Either Marriott.com and Marriott.hotel are the same, in which case they're redundant. Or they're different, in which case it's confusing - without adding any extra value, because there's only one Marriott."

ICANN SVP Kurt Pritz told the committee that if two different entities want to register the same gTLD, they will be encouraged to work it out between themselves, instead of auctioning the gTLD to the highest bidder. He pointed out that the \$185,000 registration fee and other requirements will keep unqualified registrars out of the game, and added that ICANN will renegotiate its contracts with domain name registrars to include as many of the law enforcement recommendations as feasible.

"If they can't take care of cybersquatting now, how will they be able to with thousands more top-level domains?" Jaffe said. "Every top-level domain generates thousands and hundreds of thousands of defensive domain registrations. Companies will have to buy their names back from cybersquatters or buy a top-level domain. We're talking about billions of dollars here."

Dyson added, "With new TLDs, there will be even less oversight, because ICANN is already stretched."

Pritz denied there would be a dramatic increase in the need for defensive registrations. He said the ICANN plan includes trademark protections that will let brands protect their names, a rapid take-down system, and a post-delegation dispute resolution process where trademark owners can go after registrars who abuse their trademarks.

Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar asked, "Who is really pushing for this?"

According to .NXT, an information service covering Internet governance and policy, only seven brands have so far submitted applications for new extensions, including Deloitte, Aigo Digital Technology and Canon.

Pritz responded that the decision is the result of "a consensus-based process."

Acknowledging that the Senate had no authority over ICANN, committee members pled for putting on the brakes. ICANN plans to begin selling gTLDs on Jan. 12.

When Klobuchar mentioned a 2010 study that showed that a slower rollout might address the concerns of businesses and advertisers, Pritz reiterated ICANN's schedule. "The application window will open on Jan. 12 and close on April 12," he said. "We are committed to evaluating the process after the initial round."

He added that, in two previous times that ICANN had added gTLDs, it limited the type and number, but found that the expected benefits hadn't been realized.

West Virginia Sen. Jay Rockefeller was conciliatory, acknowledging that ICANN had gone through a lengthy process and that there were opportunities, as well as challenges. He said, "I hope we can phase the expansion over time and not be regretful it was done too hastily."

Will Google Kill Firefox?

Nonprofit Mozilla derives the vast majority of its revenue - 98% last year - from search partners including Google, Bing, Yahoo!, Yandex, Amazon.com, and eBay.

In Mozilla's recently released 2010 annual report, the foundation indicates that 86% and 84% of royalty revenue came from one contract in 2009 and 2010, respectively. Mozilla separately confirms that Google is its largest contract. Last year's royalty revenue was \$121.1 million, and quickly drawing my handy scientific calculator - the one I keep holstered at my side at all times - shows us that adds up to approximately \$101.7 million coming from Big G.

This contract expired last month, and Mozilla has opted not to confirm whether this contract was renewed. Instead, it provides a frustratingly vague statement: "We have every confidence that search partnerships will remain a solid generator of revenue for Mozilla for the foreseeable future."

At the end of last year, Firefox had \$34.9 million in cash and equivalents and \$105.7 million in investments on the balance sheet, and ran through

\$87.3 million in total expenses. Software development expenses comprised \$62.8 million of that last year, up from \$40.2 million in 2009, as the browser wars have been technologically escalating.

If Google decides not to continue handing down nine-figure paydays, would Firefox be dead? This question is especially timely since fellow Fool Tim Beyers points out that Microsoft isn't Mozilla's worst enemy - it's Google.

Let's assume for a moment that Google bails on Mozilla's contract. That's a gaping multicolored hole on its income statement, one that's large enough to cripple Mozilla. While \$100 million may be but a drop in Google's bucket, which brought in \$9.7 /billion/ gross revenue last quarter, that figure is the majority of Mozilla's entire bucket.

Would any of Mozilla's other search partners step up to foot the bill?

Microsoft Bing has already lost billions getting up and running. The company's online services division, which includes Bing, is slowly narrowing its losses; it lost \$494 million last quarter, down from \$549 million in red ink a year ago. According to comScore's October figures, Bing carries a 14.8% market share, lagging Yahoo!'s Bing-powered 15.2% and Google's 65.6%.

Microsoft can certainly afford to take Google's place funding Firefox, but the question is whether it should. Just when Mr. Softy's online services division losses start to stabilize, expanding its partnership with Mozilla would reverse that trend and make the division's red ink even brighter.

Yahoo! has enough problems of its own to deal with, from running around with its head cut off CEO Tim Armstrong's advances, who keeps trying to go steady (no means no, mister!). Armstrong's nuptials aside, Yahoo! might even be considered the prettiest girl at the ball if the recent round of Microhoo rumors are to be believed.

While Yahoo! technically has enough cash to consider stepping up, finishing last quarter with around \$2 billion in cash, equivalents, and short-term investments, it also saw its revenue shrink by about a quarter. Yahoo! has already agreed to let Bing be a backseat search driver anyway, so it's hard to imagine that the company could justify picking up where Google left off.

At this point, it should be pretty clear that Google has its finger on the Mozilla switch and could easily turn off the development spigot at its discretion. Doing so would give search rivals an opportunity to come in and buy the precious spot as Firefox's default search engine.

Microsoft is the only one that would presumably come to the rescue, but that's far from a sure bet. At that point though, the Redmond giant would be better off just buying Mozilla, letting it continue its own development path, rolling it into the online services division, and conveniently steering people toward Bing search. I doubt Microsoft would easily relinquish more than 15 years of IE branding, but a Fool can dream, can't he?

If no one stepped up, Firefox would eventually die a slow and painful death as development halted and users slowly migrated from a stagnant browser to the shiniest version of Chrome. It may see its search market share flinch slightly as Firefox swirled down the drain, but the

long-term result would be one less contender. Ultimately, Google should pull the trigger and put an end to Mozilla's successful seven-year run. Next stop: becoming the browser king.

Add Google to your watchlist to see if it takes out Firefox and becomes the browser king. Google Android is helping drive the mobile revolution; get access to this free report on a handful of component suppliers that are winning from the mobile revolution.

Top Facebook Memes in 2011: Planking, 'lms' and 'tbh'

Memes such as planking, "lms" (like my status) and "tbh" (to be honest) were identified as the top trending cultural phenomena for the year on social networking site Facebook.

Around the world, Facebook users laughed at and posted photos of people planking - a movement in which people lie face down in unusual locations. The trend swept through the site, peaking in May after the son of the New Zealand prime minister posted a picture of himself planking in the family lounge (with his father in the background).

The acronyms for "like my status" and "to be honest" were also popular memes on the site in 2011.

"A new use of lms emerged this year as a way to interact with friends on Facebook," revealed Facebook in its annual Memology. "This catapulted lms to become the fastest-growing meme of 2011."

"Tbh" also went viral on the site during the year and the phrase "lms for a tbh" became the most iconic status update for 2011 said Facebook.

Status updates were closely linked to news stories and major events in 2011. Early in the year sports events captured the attention of fans around the world. Facebook users cheered on their favorite teams when the Green Bay Packers triumphed over the Pittsburgh Steelers to win the Super Bowl XLV on February 6.

Charlie Sheen's antics transfixed the social networking world too, sparking a global trend of "winning," "tiger blood" and "goddesses" memes.

In April Facebook users' statuses were filled with posts about the Royal Wedding in England as Kate Middleton and Prince William tied the knot.

Facebook reveals that "mentions of the phrase 'Royal Wedding' sho[t] up nearly 600-fold in the days running up to their wedding day."

Days later, the death of Osama bin Laden took precedence over the wedding and close to 1 in 10 status updates in English mentioned news of his death.

"The year was also marked by outpourings of sadness and memories after the deaths of Amy Winehouse in July and Steve Jobs in October," said Facebook.

In November fans of the video game Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 filled the site with "mw3"-related posts and helped make Modern Warfare 3 the biggest entertainment launch of all time.

On microblogging site Twitter, the highest number of tweets per second (tps)

was recorded on August 26. Twitter users set a new record of 8,868 tweets per second when Beyonc  revealed that she was pregnant during the MTV Video Music Awards.

Additional tps spikes for 2011 were recorded on January 1 (6,939 tps) for New Year s Eve, on May 28 (6,303 tps) for the UEFA Champions League, on June 27 (6,436 tps) for the BET Awards, on July 17 (7,196 tps) for the end of the FIFA women s World Cup, on August 25 (7,064 tps) when Steve Jobs resigned from Apple and again on October 6 (6,049 tps) when Steve Jobs died.

==~==~==

Atari Online News, Etc. is a weekly publication covering the entire Atari community. Reprint permission is granted, unless otherwise noted at the beginning of any article, to Atari user groups and not for profit publications only under the following terms: articles must remain unedited and include the issue number and author at the top of each article reprinted. Other reprints granted upon approval of request. Send requests to: dpj@atarinews.org

No issue of Atari Online News, Etc. may be included on any commercial media, nor uploaded or transmitted to any commercial online service or internet site, in whole or in part, by any agent or means, without the expressed consent or permission from the Publisher or Editor of Atari Online News, Etc.

Opinions presented herein are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, or of the publishers. All material herein is believed to be accurate at the time of publishing.